Master's Program in Disability Sciences

■ Master of Arts in Disability Sciences

Program Educational Objectives

As the first stage in cultivating research professionals, this program trains researchers with basic research competence who can promote scientific and practical research of disability sciences, as well as highly skilled professionals and competent special needs educators who have a scientific foundation, appropriately demonstrate their skills in practice, and have the potential to become leaders in Japan and abroad.

Graduate Profile	From a foundation of basic and practical knowledge and skills in disability sciences, graduates will be able to use the exploration of the nature of disabilities and their characteristics to contribute to the development and application of assistive technologies.

Diploma Policy

The degree of Master of Arts in Disability Sciences is commenced to those who have fulfilled the requirements for the completion of the Master's programs, as set out in the Graduate School Regulations of the University of Tsukuba and related university regulations, and who are deemed to have the following competences.

	Competences	Evaluation perspectives
Knowledge and Skills	1. Knowledge application competence: Ability to contribute to society with advanced knowledge	①Can you apply knowledge gained through research and other activities in society? ②Can you identify new problems, even in other fields of expertise, based on broad knowledge?
	2. Management competence: Ability to appropriately address challenges from broad standpoints	①Can you take on major tasks with systematic planning? ②Can you understand and solve problems from multiple perspectives?
	3. Communication competence: Ability to accurately and clearly communicate expert knowledge	①Are you capable of efficient communication for research purposes? ②Can you discuss research or research-specific knowledge with experts from your own field and from other fields?
	4. Teamwork competence: Ability to work with a team and actively contribute to the achievement of goals	①Do you have experience cooperatively and actively working on challenges as part of a team? ②Have you helped promote projects and activities other than your own research?
	5. Internationality competence: Willingness to contribute to international society	①Are you aware of making contributions to international society and getting involved in international activities? ②Have you obtained the linguistic skills necessary for international information collection and action?
	6. Ability to plan and execute research: The basic knowledge and skills to plan and execute research relating to disability science	①Can the student develop a research plan for an important issue based on knowledge of disability sciences? ②Can the student present, modify as needed, and execute a research plan they developed?
	7. Ability to understand disability: Extensive knowledge of disability sciences and the ability to apply it	①Can the student understand and describe knowledge and techniques related to disability sciences, as well as current conditions and challenges? ②Can the student identify and work to solve research questions related to disability sciences based on expert knowledge?

	Competences	Evaluation perspectives
Knowledge and Skills	8. Ethical understanding and attitude: The ability to follow ethical procedures necessary for research and practice aiming to understand disabilities and resolve associated challenges	①Has the student taken and completed a course on ethics in disability sciences? ②Can the student understand the ethical perspectives and knowledge necessary for disability sciences research and execute such research?
Guidelines for Assessing Learning Outcomes	The master's thesis is regarded as the culmination of learning achievements. The comprehensive evaluation of students' attainment of learning outcomes, based on the degree-awarding policy, is conducted through thesis writing and the thesis design, as well as the interim and final presentations (“Disability Science Research Methods I, II, III”). The master's thesis is examined and evaluated by a Dissertation Committee composed of three members: one main supervisor and two co-supervisors. The evaluation is based on the criteria for the degree thesis and the knowledge and skills (competences) stipulated in the degree-awarding policy, specifically assessing whether students: – Possess advanced knowledge of disability studies and can apply research findings for social benefit (Application of Knowledge) – Analyze issues from multiple perspectives with broad vision and planning, and solve problems related to disability (Management Ability) – Clearly and accurately communicate their research and expertise (Communication Ability) – Work collaboratively with others in research and problem-solving (Teamwork) – Have the awareness and language skills to contribute internationally, gather global information, and disseminate findings (International Competence) – Plan and conduct research on important issues in disability science (Research Planning and Execution) – Identify and explain research topics based on wide-ranging knowledge of disability science (Understanding of Disability) – Conduct research appropriately with ethical awareness and knowledge (Ethics and Attitude)	

Evaluation Criteria for Degree Theses/ Dissertations	– In the guidance of the master's thesis, the Research Guidance Committee consisting of 1 thesis advisor (chairman) and 2 assistant advisors (committee members) will provide guidance. The submitted thesis will be reviewed and evaluated by a Thesis Review Committee comprising 1 primary reviewer and 2 secondary reviewers. – Evaluation of the master's thesis will be made comprehensively from the following perspectives, based on the peer review of the submitted thesis, the content of the final presentation, and the results of the final examination. 1. The significance and position of the research in the field of disability sciences is clearly expressed based on an understanding of research and research trends in relevant fields both in Japan and internationally. 2. The results of original research contributing to the development of the field of disability sciences are included in an amount appropriate for a master's thesis. 3. The reliability of the research findings has been adequately verified based on sufficient knowledge of research integrity. 4. The discussion of the research findings is valid, and the conclusion is based on objective evidence. 5. The research background, objective, method, results, discussion, and conclusion are organized in a format appropriate for a master's thesis in this field.

Curriculum Policy

In the Master's Program in Disability Sciences, students acquire basic and practical knowledge and skills in disability sciences, cultivate the ability to explore and identify the nature of disabilities and disability characteristics, and attain basic research competence. From this foundation of basic research competence, students further acquire the ability to contribute to the development and application of assistive technologies. To achieve this, students are provided with education and research guidance aiming to cultivate research skills, expert knowledge, and an ethical perspective in a core specialization, along with basic training in related fields, a broad perspective, and general knowledge and abilities that support activities in a variety of social settings.

Curriculum Design Framework	– Foundational courses are core courses that form a foundation for disability sciences and provide students with basic research skills in disability sciences leading to three career tracks. Major courses (general) provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for highly skilled professionals, including an ability to understand disabilities and disability characteristics, as well as principles, systems, and support methods for disability-related education and welfare. Major courses are designed to provide students with in-depth knowledge and skills in specific specializations from the many perspectives on individual needs arising from principles, systems, and disability characteristics according to their academic needs and interests and in light of the three career tracks.

Curriculum Design Framework	– Through Disability Sciences Surveys and Experiments Lab I and II, students will acquire the ability to plan and execute research and ethical understanding and attitude. – Through other foundational courses such as Disability Sciences Research Methods, students will acquire the ability to plan and execute research, as well as the ability to bridge the gap between research and practice. – Through major courses (general), students will acquire the ability to understand disabilities and develop and execute services. – Through Special Topics courses, a subset of major courses, students will acquire the ability to plan and execute research and the ability to understand disabilities in each specialized area of disability sciences or in areas that apply across different disabilities (e.g., principles, systems). – Through Practicum courses, a subset of major courses, students will acquire the ability to develop and execute services, the ability to bridge the gap between research and practice, and ethical understanding and attitude in each specialized area of disability sciences, or for areas that apply across different disabilities (e.g., principles, systems).
Teaching and Learning Methods	– Students will acquire a total of 30 credits: 5 credits from compulsory foundational courses, 7 credits from major courses in their specialization (Special Topics I and II, Practicum I, II, and III in the student's area of specialization and generally taught by their thesis advisor), and at least 18 credits from other courses (general graduate courses, elective foundational courses, major courses [general], or Special Topics I and II/Practicum I and II in an area outside the student's specialization). – Research guidance for the master's thesis will be provided in an organized and systematic manner through the foundational courses Disability Sciences Surveys and Experiments Lab I and II (compulsory) in the first year, the foundational courses Disability Sciences Research Methods I, II, and III (compulsory) in the first and second years, and the major course Practicum III (elective compulsory) in the student's area of specialization in the second year. – Students aiming to become disability sciences researchers will take courses with an emphasis on learning basic research competence (in foundational courses) and specialized knowledge and skills in both specific disability and cross-disability areas (in major courses) as the first step in their training as a researcher. – Students aiming to become educators in special needs schools or classrooms will take courses with an emphasis on learning basic research competence (in foundational courses) and acquiring knowledge and skills related to both the principles and systems of special needs education and the physiology, psychology, curriculum, and instruction of children with disabilities (in major courses [general]) as highly skilled professionals in the field of special needs education. – Students aiming to work in rehabilitation institutions or welfare facilities for people with disabilities will take courses with an emphasis on learning basic research competence (in foundational courses) and acquiring knowledge and skills related to disability development, clinical practice, and support (in major courses [general]) as highly skilled professionals in the field of support for people with disabilities.

Admission Policy

Desired Student Profile	We are seeking individuals who aspire to contribute to disability-related areas such as life-long education, welfare support, administration, and international cooperation and are eager to play an active role in the field of disability sciences as researchers or highly skilled professionals. We are accepting a wide range of applicants, including students who learned the basics of disability sciences at the undergraduate level, those who come from another field and seek to specialize in disability sciences, educators or working professionals, individuals with medical qualifications, and international students.
Student Selection Process	Three types of entrance examinations are offered: general, recommendation, and special selections (working professionals or one year course for inservice teachers). The program can also be completed through our extended program system. – The general and recommendation entrance examination evaluates based on the score of the English external examination, expertise in disability science, and the logic and preparatory situation to conceive the research plan. – For the special selection for working professionals option, the English external examination will be waived, evaluates based on the examination of application documents, expertise in disability science, and the logic and preparatory situation to conceive the research plan.

Learning Support Framework

Academic Support	– In the three research presentations (Thesis Design, Interim, and Final), students receive guidance on research presentations through supervision by main and sub-advisors, as well as peer review among students. – Some lecture courses use on-demand videos effectively to improve understanding and support efficient learning. – Learning skills such as information gathering, analysis, logical thinking, and writing are supported through courses like Disability Science Surveys and Experiments, Disability Science Seminars, and Research Methods. Students receive guidance from multiple faculty members with different expertise. – To promote effective learning, students review their competence achievement status at the end of each academic year using TWINS, providing an opportunity for self-assessment of progress. – The program provides independent financial support to partially cover Article Processing Charges (APCs) and English editing costs, thereby facilitating the international dissemination of research by graduate students.

Opportunities for Peer Interaction	– For international exchange, students are given opportunities to interact with partner universities in Asia and North America through CIC partnerships and inter-departmental agreements. This helps raise international awareness and motivation for global research activities. – Several basic and specialized courses include group work, presentations, and report assignments, allowing students to learn effectively while deepening interactions both inside and outside class. – At the end of each academic year, a joint student meeting for master's and doctoral students is held, providing opportunities to share information about thesis writing, job hunting, and student life. It includes talks and networking with graduates, encouraging students to think about career development after degree completion. – In common graduate courses offered by this program (organized by BHE), students with diverse expertise work in teams to propose new projects. This provides opportunities for interaction, fosters motivation, and encourages solutions to social issues.
Opportunities for Student–Faculty Interaction	– In the thesis supervision system, each student is guided by one main advisor and two sub-advisors, providing opportunities to work with faculty from diverse fields. – Participation in joint research meetings and faculty-led projects gives students chances to interact and increase their research motivation. – Tools such as Teams and Manaba are used to provide feedback on reports and tests, and to check and support research progress. – Individual meetings are held as needed, with coordination between main and sub-advisors to support students toward degree completion. – Networking events with graduates active in society provide opportunities for career and research consultation. – Using Microsoft Forms, students complete self-evaluations of competence and give feedback on the curriculum. The results are shared in orientations and through individual feedback from advisors. – At the end of each year, student surveys and meetings are held to exchange opinions about education and research guidance in the program. – Upon graduation, students are asked to provide an active email address to build an alumni network.

Approaches to Assuring and Enhancing Educational Quality

- In the program's education meetings, attended by all faculty members, the results of students' self-evaluation surveys on competences and the evaluations of the master's thesis presentations are shared with the entire faculty to verify the appropriateness of the curriculum and the suitability of the research guidance.
- Graduates who are active in society are invited to serve as external evaluation committee members for this degree program. We receive comments from graduates regarding the improvement of the program's education and research guidance and hold discussions. The feedback from these external sources is used to consider the direction for quality assurance and improvement of education.
- At the end of each year, program-specific student surveys and student meetings are held to exchange opinions on the program's education and research guidance. The results are used for inspecting educational activities and considering initiatives for educational improvement in the following and subsequent years.